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## STRYCHNINE AS FOOD OF *ARÆOCERUS FASCICULARIS* DE GEER.

BY ROBERT E. BROWN, S. J.,

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The weevil, *Aræocerus fascicularis*, is well known in all parts of the world on account of its cosmopolitan habits. It feeds on all kinds of seeds and nuts, but one of the strangest which it has been known to eat is the St. Ignatius' bean, *Strychninos ignatii* Berg. This plant grows wild in many parts of the Philippines, but is especially plentiful in the Island of Samar, where the fruit is called by the natives pepita-sa-catbalongan and pepita de San Ignacio. The bean is exceedingly poisonous, though it is used by the natives as a remedy for certain diseases, and it is not uncommon, as a consequence, that people die from an overdose. A quantitative analysis of the bean gave as a result  $1\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. strychnine and  $\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. brucine.

Strychnine is one of the deadliest poisons known, yet this little beetle not only feeds on it, but actually breeds in the cavities which it has bored in the seed. In the Observatory Museum there was a bottle containing some ten Ignatius' beans and it was noticed that a male and female *A. fascicularis* had been enclosed with them. The insects seemed to be in good health and they began gnawing the beans without any evil effects. Wishing to see if the weevil could live on such deadly poison, the bottle was sealed and set aside and in about six months, when examined, it was found that ten adult insects were enjoying themselves within. They were taken out and the beans treated with bisulphide of carbon to kill any eggs that might have been deposited in them by the weevils. Two males and two females were then replaced in the bottle with the beans and the stopper sealed. In little more than a week they all died, but in two months young larvæ could be seen in the cavities of the beans and they all grew to maturity. Since that time more than four generations of *A. fascicularis* have been bred and no other food but the Ignatius' beans was given them.